DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 232 985 SP 022 844

AUTHOR Bush, Robert N.
TITLE The Beginning Years of Teaching: A Focus for Collaboration in Teacher Education.
PUB DATE Mar 83
NOTE 21p.; Paper presented at the World Assembly of the International Council on Education for Teaching (30th, Washington, DC, July 11-15, 1983).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Beginning Teachers; *Cooperative Programs; Educational Research; Higher Education; *Internship Programs; On the Job Training; *Teacher Certification; Teacher Education; Teacher Orientation; *Teaching Experience; Training Methods; Work Experience Programs

ABSTRACT

A proposal is made for a program focusing on the transition period between preservice and inservice teacher education. The first phase of the program would be attainment of a strong liberal arts background, culminating in a B. A. degree, containing little or no pedagogical theory or practice. The second, or training phase, would consist of an internship/externship/residency sequence of positions lasting from 2 to 6 years. These positions would be located in training complexes and in individual schools within them. The training complexes would consist of teacher trainers from institutions of higher education, personnel of the local education agencies, and community representatives. One feature of this phase would be a collective effort on the part of all participants to improve the school. The intern would received extensive practice, assistance, observation, feedback, and experience in different levels of teaching and in different classrooms during this phase. The third phase, involving assessment and examination for admission to practice, would come when the trainee felt equipped and ready, and would take place over a period of several months, interspersed with or even as an integral part of the trainee's regular work in the school. Also discussed in detail are the problems in teacher education that this proposal addresses and requirements to make such a system work. (JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED232985

THE BEGINNING YEARS OF TEACHING:

A FOCUS FOR COLLABORATION IN TEACHER EDUCATION

By

Robert N. Bush
Professor of Education and
Director, Center for Educational
Research at Stanford, Emeritus
Stanford University
Stanford, Ca. 94305

Paper presented at the World
Assembly of the International
Council for Education on Teaching
(30th, Washington, DC, July 11-15
1983)

March 1983

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Robert N. Bush

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

✓ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

SP 022 844

THE BEGINNING YEARS OF TEACHING: A FOCUS FOR COLLABORATION IN TEACHER EDUCATION

Robert N. Bush
Stanford University
Stanford, Ca. 94305

The argument we advance is that the beginning years of teaching are a deeply troubled part of the education profession. If we could focus our attention on this period and bring about a collaboration of all who are concerned and have a role to play, then this trouble spot could be turned into a new source of energy for the reformation of teacher education.

As a result of understandable demographic forces in the United States, the pendulum is now swinging from an earlier preoccupation with preservice to one of engrossment with inservice education. But this is to "rob Peter to pay Paul." Admittedly, inservice teacher education needs all possible attention. But should less effort go into preservice teacher education, already long underfunded? We need much more energy that is better directed in both fields. My argument is that it may be possible to improve both if we collaborate and jointly concentrate our energies at critical points, thus multiplying our power.

The central proposition to which I invite attention is the possible advantage of <u>all</u> parties in collaborating and focusing our attention not on preservice or inservice teacher education, but on the transition period between the two, in the first few years (3-5) when new teachers begin their practice--a highly teachable period

(1). The strategy that I propose for consideration is that we would substantially increase the effectiveness of our efforts in teacher education by a decade of focus on the beginning years in the profession. By "we" I mean all of the different interested parties: (1) those in the institutions of higher education, (2) the experienced teachers and administrators in the schools, (3) the licensing and accreditation officials, (4) the research and development agencies, (5) the professional organizations and associations, (6) teacher trainees, (7) students in the schools, and (8) members of the community. If these eight groups could enter into active collaboration, we could significantly increase the efficiency with which the teacher education dollar is spent; an essential, given the forces of inflation and increasing competition among all social services for a share of the tax dollar. Part of the reason that I propose and am optimistic about the possibilities of collaboration grows out of my experience with the Beginning Teacher Consortium and particularly the six years with the National Urban/Rural School Development Program. In our final report (2), we documented the fact that school community councils made up of 1/2 community members and 1/2 educators, which had real power to make

decisions on programs, personnel, and budget, can work effectively. The greater the degree of parity between the two groups, the better the program of inservice education--sharing power increases power.

Concentrating attention on the beginning teacher is not a new idea. I know that increased attention to the beginning teacher has been advised for years, and some minor attention has been devoted to it. Some promising beginnings have been reported in England (3). But little has actually been accomplished. The time is now ripe to do something substantial and far-reaching.

Beginning teachers who come to their first positions from the collegiate training institutions are generally not well treated. Senior teachers have been given first chance at teaching in the "better" schools and are assigned to the "preferable" classes, subjects, pupils and hours in the day. The newcomers take what is left over. After a short orientation, they are left to fend for themselves. New teachers develop a survival mentality and do not feel free to consult more experienced colleagues about what they may consider some of their weaknesses and failures. They do not have lighter loads for the first year or two, which would be preferable, given their lack of experience and the amount they have to learn in those beginning years. However excellent their initial preparation, there is much that cannot be learned until a teacher is in a natural classroom situation with full responsibility. The socialization of the newcomer into the profession is handled poorly, often because of sheer neglect. A more detailed description of the conditions and the

problems surrounding this will be discussed below.

I organize the argument in support of my thesis around two questions: (1) What current problems in teacher education would such an approach address? (2) What conditions are requisite for an effective mounting of such an effort?

But before tackling these questions, let me be specific and describe in some detail what this strategy would look like in practice so that what I am advocating can be better understood. If we are to mount a genuinely collaborative effort in teacher education and to engage in research on it, the first order of business is to get some meaningful collaboration underway. For that reason, I offer a specific proposal that gives shape and substance to the idea of collaboration. I invite others to formulate other proposals so that a better one can emerge.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STRATEGY

There would be three phases:

Phase I. The Pre-Professional Work

The first phase consists of a strong liberal arts background which culminates in an A.B. degree. This would contain little or no pedagogical theory or practice, much as I outlined in a recent article in the Journal of Teacher Education (4). This concludes typically at the end of the time when a person has been engaged full time in a higher educational institution. It could be less or more than four years, depending upon the individual.

Phase II. The Training

To enter this period would not be easy. Those who wished to undertake training would take the initiative and be responsible for applying and being accepted for an internship/externship/residency sequence of positions that would then last from two to five years, perhaps in one or two different locations, 2-3 years in one place and 2-3 years in another. These positions would be located in training complexes and in individual schools within them, located in communities as integral parts of the school system. These complexes--some of the features of which I described in the Journal of Teacher Education (5)--would be a consortia of teacher trainers from the institutions of higher education, personnel of the local education agencies and community representatives. This is our first collaborative step.

Upon acceptance into a training complex, the candidate would be given a limited credential, good only for the duration of the internship. These complexes would be located in neighborhoods of different socio-economic and ethnic composition in both urban and rural areas. A large attrition between those who completed an A.B. degree in pre-professional education and those successfully achieving admission into training would be anticipated. This is a strong feature of the plan. This large attrition would not be a loss to the social system. It represents to some extent a self-selection process, leaving those who had more than ordinary motivation to enter teaching, not an unimportant feature. Those who chose to enter other

fields would still have a good liberal background which would serve them well not only as workers in other fields but also as citizens and parents. And the cost is not high in comparison with professional training. The program in these training complexes may, for purposes of discussion, be divided into two strands although they should operate so as to be almost indistinguishable: Strand I-School Improvement and Stand II-Training.

The dominating and permeating idea of the plan in Strand I-is School Improvement. The model of this collaborative venture is a problem solving one in which the regular teachers and administrators in the school, teacher training representatives from the cooperating institutions of higher education in the region, the beginning teachers, interns, students in the school, and community members would be engaged in a comprehensive effort to improve the school so that a better education would be provided for the students. Accompanying this problem-solving effort would be a training effort in Strand II. The heart of this would be extensive practice by the intern over a period of several years practice; at different grade levels with different kinds of students, in classrooms and in other than formal classroom situations, in learning how to work with students individually and in small groups, and with parents and community members. There would be extensive observation of this practice, by different groups--peers, school and higher educational personnel. Time would be provided for critical, thoughtful discussion about that practice, and then opportunity to try again and

to perfect that practice. There would be timely feedback, opportunity for discussion and correction. Sufficient practice of this kind over an extended period of time would be provided so that attention could be given not only to the perfection of a wide array of technical skills, but also to the professional decision-making side of teacher preparation which is so often now neglected and left to chance. Trainees would thus be given a chance to develop their own unique styles of teaching and learn how to make wise professional decisions as to which of the repertoire of skills to draw upon in a given situation.

In a school or group of schools in which both of these strands--school improvement and training--were underway, there would emerge new roles in which both higher education professors and school staff would become colleagues in the role of clinical instructor, conducting continuing seminars that would be organized and offered for the interns, sometimes in the school and sometimes at the university. This training would operate on a twelve-month basis with regular time and dollars budgeted for it.

Phase III. Assessment and Licensing

Sometime during the 4th or 5th year--not earlier than the 4th and maybe later than the 5th--the individual would say, "I'm ready to take my examination for admission to practice." This could be a joint decision with the advisor or his basic seminar leader. It would not be a hurried affair, but would take place over a period of several months interspersed with or even as an integral part of the trainee's regular work in the school. It would consist of at least

these parts, perhaps with new ones to be developed:

(1)Demonstration of a variety of basic skills in specific situations; (2) Observation by experienced clinical instructors from schools and colleges; (3) Written examinations on pedagogy and subject matter; (4) Possibly an oral examination, and/or (5) a written project which would demonstrate the trainee's problem solving (research) capacity. New parties in the collaboration enter at this point, namely those responsible for licensing and accrediting standards. The examination would be jointly set, given and scored by the state and the profession, and when successfully passed, result in the issuance of a basic license to practice. It might be desirable to design into the system a higher, more "specialized" license that would be achieved later. It would be assumed that the state licensing and accreditation system as well as the colleges, schools, and professional organizations, would set standards and in other ways encourage the development of such a system.

THE PROBLEMS IN TEACHER EDUCATION THAT THIS SCHEME ADDRESSES

What important problems of teacher education would be addressed if all groups were to collaborate and concentrate attention for a decade upon the beginning years as we have just sketched? There are at least four, which will be briefly touched upon: (1) Time, (2) Practice, (3) Inter-relationship of the various parts of the system, and (4) Inquiry (research and development) about the system.

1. Time. One of the main lessons that we have learned over the past decade or two is that the proper training of a teacher takes time (see footnote 4). We are forever trying to crowd too much into too short a period. As a consequence, we do too little thoroughly, skip shoddily over many parts, and miss others altogether. Ideas about teaching need time to mature. Skills require repeated and criticized practice. Time is required for a unique teaching style to emerge in a manner that is suited to an individual's talents. Under current conditions, the transition from neophyte to socialized professional is crowded into such a brief period under such unfavorable circumstances that this aspect constitutes one of the weakest parts of the system, with consequent extremely high costs in morale and professional self-esteem. The provision of a period of several years in which to perfect skills and competence in decision-making and to begin a positive socialization into the profession would be a major improvement in teacher education. This was brought home forcefully to me over a period of several years as I watched the difference between our regular trainees at Stanford who had one year of post-baccalaureate training in the regular intern program, and the Teacher Corps interns of our 10th cycle project in cooperation with the San Jose City Schools who had two years to complete their program. The marked advantage in the degree of confidence felt by the two-year trainees as they entered their first regular positions, in the breadth and degree of skill represented, including the capacity to handle discipline, provide individualized

instruction, relate to the community in their already mature planning about their own future professional development, and in their favorable attitude about being in the profession.

2. Practice. Even though practice has long been considered by many to be the most useful part of the training program, it has been so little and so late that it has not been possible to take full advantage of it. But the need for, and the positive consequence of, providing trainees with much more and varied practice, observed and criticized at a variety of grade levels and under different conditions, have been proven again and again. Most important is the need for practice to take place under relatively "safe" conditions, where mistakes and weaknesses are expected and shared, so that these conditions can become rooted in normal expectations for a lifelong period. Under the present short period of practice, there is only one chance. It must be right the first time. This is the sole source of judgement as to whether the candidate passes or fails. Under the plan outlined, critical summative evaluation does not take place until after several years of practice. There is no immediate threat of passing or failing "student teaching" or of achieving tenure. Not only would much of the threat typically surrounding beginning practice be reduced but the deep satisfaction that derives from perfecting practice and from the performance of skilled behavior would be enjoyed and shared. The psychological relief at not having to "hide" shortcomings would have a salutory effect upon the mental health of the profession.

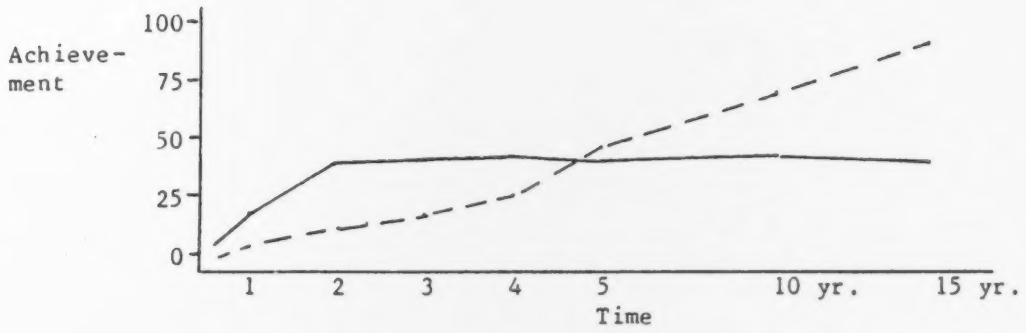
3. Interrelationship of Various Parts of the System.

Teacher education has always been rife with dysfunctional dichotomies such as between theory and practice, beginners and "old timers," schools and universities, subject matter and method to mention a few of the prominent ones. They constitute serious obstacles that need attention if the profession is to grow into full maturity. The traditional conflicts, misunderstandings, and differences in points of view about teacher education that abound between those in the schools an those in the colleges have many deleterious effects that are harmful to newcomers to the profession. Just as they begin their careers and are in process of becoming socialized into the profession, they are subjected to disharmony between those who have just trained them and those who are now their seniors in the schools. What are they to believe about a profession that is so split? The "old-timers" tell them, "Forget those theoretical and impractical ideas that you learned at the university and we will help you learn to teach here in the real world." That teachers in the schools convey this message is disturbing enough to the neophyte, but that they then also typically fail to deliver the promised help only compounds the mischief. It is probably one of the most debilitating matters that confronts the newcomers. It makes them unnecessarily wary and impels them even further than is natural to keep their own counsel. It surely contributes--as do many other factors--to the erection of the "classroom-castle" concept with high barrier walls built between classrooms.

It is our contention and hope that in the scheme proposed, the newcomer's first few years would be under much more favorable circumstances than those just alluded to. With experienced teachers and university trainers working together in the school site over a period of several years, on a regular basis in which the university personnel are immersed in real school problems, sharing the difficulties and contributing something to their solution, attitudes toward one another would probably alter. We have some evidence that under such circumstances they indeed do. This would have a positive effect upon the trainees. The manner of working in a school problem-solving mode with continuous seminars taught on site both by the college and the school clinical instructors should make the traditional gap between theory and practice much easier to bridge. The manner of training and the work in which the trainees would be engaged would emphasize a collegial, team approach to tasks much more than now prevails in the schools or in typical student teaching programs. The new model brings teaching much more into the open and begins to overcome the paucity of teacher-teacher dialogue that prevails in schools today. For too long teachers have lived mainly within their classroom walls, where most of their relationships are with younger, immature persons. More than most professions, teachers have suffered from too little interaction with their colleagues and other mature adults. The more stimulating environment of sustained dialogue with colleagues on important matters of teaching which this new model provides would be salutory.

4. Inquiry, Problem solving, and Research and Development Orientation

Until fairly recently, the colleges were considered to be the producers of research, and the schools its consumers. Teachers claimed little understanding of or interest in research, and researchers were interested mainly in gaining access to classrooms to gather their data as easily and as quickly as possible. No questions were asked on either side, and there the matter ended. Little wonder that the researcher's findings were seldom consequential and that there was ltle demand for or interest in them by the practitioners. Happily, things are beginning to change. The roles of practitioner, researcher, and policy maker are beginning to merge as the educational research and development process matures. As we approach a problem solving, collegial attitude in the study, improvement and practice of teaching, many new and interesting things may begin to happen. For example, we know very little about the curve of learning to teach or about how it might be shaped in a more favorable way. This is a main research question on which we might well concentrate in the period ahead. It would be particularly useful if an international team from several countries cooperatively undertook such an inquiry. Under the circumstances outlined in this proposal, it would be possible to tackle this problem. It is our hypothesis that the curve for learning to teach might change significantly under the new model. (See Figure 1.)



Under current conditions: _____
Under new model: - - - - - - - - - - - -

Figure 1.
Curve of Learning to Teach

Under current conditions, the newcomers have to learn to swim very quickly or they will sink. Consequently, the stress is upon learning how to survive the moment, not necessariy upon how to develop a powerful performance that will be sustained and improve over time. This early crisis mentality of quickly learning successful survival techniques which often become frozen into the teacher's basic repertoire and style, results in a potential far below that which

could be achieved if a more gradual approach were taken in which there was ample time in a safe atmosphere to practice potentially more powerful strategies that take longer to perfect. Under better designed early years, a long term sustained growth in teaching power would be more likely to result. This is mere hypothesis at present. But it would be possible to test the proposition under the model proposed. It would be no small achievement if we could in training promote the long term sustained growth of teaching skill and professional competence in decision-making, the development of a wide repertoire of skills, and unique teaching styles. Under this system, cooperation in team teaching would be given a better chance to work than heretofore. This again would a a significant outcome.

These four problem areas of time, practice, interrelationships of the parts of the system, and attitudes toward inquiry that the new system tackles are illustrative, not exhaustive; but they do, however, deal with some of the more serious problems that have long confronted teacher education.

REQUIREMENTS TO MAKE SUCH A PROPOSED SYSTEM WORK

The following four requirements at least seem essential if such a plan is to be realized:

1. Master planning. The different segments of the system and agencies therein would need to work together. Collaboration of the many different parties is essential. No institution of higher education or local school district could accomplish the task alone. A subgeographical region of a state or, preferably, a whole state

plan would need to be developed. In California, after World War II, we developed a statewide master plan for higher education that has not only had a phenomenal success but has been a model for other places in this country and abroad. The California Commission for Teacher Licensing is concerned with the possibility of building a master plan for teacher education in California. Perhaps several other states might join in a collaborative effort. If the idea began to succeed in several places, we might well be on the way toward making a national impact on problems in teacher education. I believe that nothing short of this magnitude of effort will be required to make a fundamental improvement in teacher education.

2. Necessity for those in the field of teacher education to change ways of thinking about teacher education. Teacher education should not be something that we do mainly or solely in the colleges and then requires a retread job several years later. It should be a continuous process that begins with a modest effort, and gradually assumes greater concentration and attention as the training proceeds in regular school settings. It should be a genuinely joint effort of school, college, trainee, the state and the community. This has not been our traditional way of thinking about the problem. But this shift in thinking is beginning to take place as many of us face the future realistically.

3. Change in the way in which teacher educators spend their time. For the college personnel, the amount of time in a series of separate and formally organized single teacher taught

classes with a textbook, assignments, and written examinations will probably decrease. The amount of time spent on the university campus in relation to that spent out in the schools will decrease. Lecturing may decrease and the amount of small group discussion and tutorials will increase. Demonstration and modeling, now largely absent, may appear in increasing amounts. Experienced school personnel will spend less time in the classroom with students and more time with their younger colleagues who are just beginning. They will spend less time teaching, more in observation of teaching and in discussing the results, more time in working in groups with colleagues (peers, trainees, and administrators) in planning and in solving school problems, more time in homes and in working with community members as partners in the life and work of the school, more time in thinking and talking about teaching and of ways to determine how effective it has been.

4. Some absolute increase in resources now devoted to teacher education--not just by taking them from other parts of the system. Some new funds, but mainly the redirection and better use of existing resources. The most likely sources of new funds are the states and the national government. This is a long overdue necessity and there is some suggestion that it is not an unrealistic expectation. Both national and state levels of government are already beginning to realize, as suggested by results from research, that resources put into effective and well-targeted teacher education, both pre- and

in-service, are among the most useful dollars that can be spent in improving schools.

SUMMARY

To sum up, our proposition is that at this time in educational history, we need to increase sharply the amount of energy--time, money and other resources--devoted to teacher education. The new sources of energy that can be tapped for teacher education lie in the community, the schools, the institutions of higher education and in the local, state, and national governments and in the redirection of some of our present energies. In directing new energy to teacher education, there ought to be a shift in where and how we use our augmented power. The central idea is that this new force should focus upon the beginning years of teaching. This will call for strong leadership and will not be without risks. But the result might be a renaissance in teacher education that would reverberate throughout the educational system to its enduring benefit.

Footnotes

1. For several years the California Commission on Teacher Preparation and Licensing, 1020 "O" Street, Sacramento, California 95814 (recently changed to Commission on Teacher Licensing) appointed and supported a Beginning Teacher Consortium, widely representative of the profession which formulated ideas about improving the conditions of practice and training during the early years of teaching. They set up several experimental projects to test the ideas developed. Partly on the basis of that work the Commission has recently set forth its views in its new newsletter Communique, Vol. 1, No. 1, February 1983. Among the ideas set forth is a several tiered credentialling process and the principle "that the beginning years of teaching impose unique demands on teachers, and that effective support must be provided to new teachers as a result...Preliminary preparation cannot fully prepare teachers to meet the unique demands of the first classroom teaching job...There are many experienced teachers and administrators who would be willing to help, counsel, or guide beginning teachers...The Commission believes that its reform proposals will enable beginning teachers to receive the professional assistance they need from those most capable to give aide at the time when it is critically needed." Having served with the Beginning Teacher Consortium it is satisfying to me to see that the results are bearing fruit and I am pleased to acknowledge my colleagues in the Consortium for the contribution that they made to the ideas set forth in this statement.

2. Joyce, Bruce (Ed.) Involvement: A Study of Shared Governance in Teacher Education. Washington, D.C., ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education, 1978.

3. Bolam, Ray, and Baker, Ruth "Helping New Teachers: The Induction Year," DES Reporter on Education, No. 84, March 1976, Department of Education and Science, 1/27 Elizabeth House, York Road, London SE 1 7 PH, also (May 1977), "Teacher Induction: Pilot Schemes," Progress Report: DES Reporter on Education, No.89.

4. Bush, Robert N. "We Know How to Train Teachers: Why Not Do So!" Journal of Teacher Education, 28:6,, Nov.-Dec., 1977, pgs. 5-9.

5. Bush, Robert N. "Teacher Education in the Future: Focus Upon an Entire School," Journal of Teacher Education, 1977, 26:2, pgs. 148-149.